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Combining

FORCES

An interior designer, architect, and their clients worked together to create something new and lasting.

INTERIOR DESIGN BY *Suzanne Kasler*
ARCHITECTURE BY *Ken Pursley*
PHOTOGRAPHY BY *William Abranowicz*
PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPH BY *Emily Followill*
WRITTEN BY *Edward McCann*

Prior pages, left to right: The architectural style of a new Florida Gulf Coast house—an amalgam of vernacular forms and West Indian ones—is revealed from the pool, which is furnished with Janus et Cie lounge chairs. The sculptural form of a gateway on the property embodies the architecture of the house as a whole. Opposite: Benjamin Moore's Decorator's White is used throughout, as seen here in the living room. The armoire is from Ironies and the sofa is Dmitriy & Co. The Morris cocktail table is by Suzanne Kasler for Hickory Chair. Below: Lee Industries chairs, with Rogers & Goffigon fabric, are grouped about a custom dining table. A Gregorius|Pineo bronze wall lantern is positioned next to a Dixon Rye sideboard.

Geography and architecture work in concert at the house. Below: The pool deck is fashioned of stone Peacock Pavers, upon which are placed Janus et Cie highback lounge chairs. Opposite: An eating/breakfast nook, which occupies an intimate niche near the kitchen, features an Artifacts International table made with a Napa stone base and a cocoa wood top, an Essentials for Living armchair, and a Bjork Studio custom banquette., covered in a Perennials fabric.

This page: Architect Ken Pursley designed a stairway railing that assumes a sculptural presence and profile, while remaining wholly functional. The stairway is lit by both natural light and by the Suzanne Kasler for Visual Comfort's Alice sconce. Right: The stairway landing, which centers on the entrance to the master bedroom, is lined with a Bungalow white runner.

This page: The sedate master bedroom is furnished with a Dmitriy & Co. bed with beddings and fabrics from the company, as well as others from Matouk. Galbraith & Paul sheers on white linen help regulate the bright Florida sunlight. A two-tier Visual Comfort chandelier hangs above. Right: A Badeloft freestanding tub occupies a portion of the guest bath. The vanity sink is Kohler. A polished nickel lantern casts a soothing glow at night.

A two-bed guest room is bright with natural light from the nearby Gulf of Mexico. Plumwich Tessa draperies wrap the corner; Plumwich paisley coverlets partially dress the beds.

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INTERIOR DESIGNER Suzanne Kasler knows why this recent project in coastal Florida proved a success. "Designers love people," the Atlanta-based Kasler says emphatically. "We love the relationships that develop through our involvement in a project like this." Indeed, on an island off the Florida Gulf Coast, the vision of an airy, light-filled new house was realized in its full dimension, brought into being through the combined efforts of an architect and designer whose design philosophies are like two sides of the same coin.

The result—combining influences of Florida "Cracker style" and the East Indies on the outside with spare, clean detailing inside—is the product of a close collaboration between Kasler and Ken Pursley, principal of Charlotte-based Pursley Dixon Architecture. Completing the cooperative effort were the homeowners, who engaged every step of the way in the decision-making process. So successful was the home that it is featured in his firm's book, *Finding Home,* forthcoming from Rizzoli. Kasler, who wrote the foreword, says of this project, "The interior space was conceived as one chunk of plaster that we sort of carved the rooms from. So, it's not about paneled walls and ceilings, but rather a neutral canvas that supports the foundational elements of the interiors." She cites how she and Pursley have worked together before, and how they collaborated on this project from the very beginning. "I have to say that the success of these interiors is really rooted in Ken's architectural design," Kasler emphasizes.

A header on Pursley's website, "Build Beautiful Things," seems both a mission statement and mantra. "Our design solutions begin with 'What's the known?' and 'What are the givens?'" he says. "When you're in proximity to water like this, everything we do is responding to the site. The porch overlooks the sound, the windows in the two bedrooms wrap both sides, and the heavy roof overhangs are as pragmatic as they are stylistic; you wear a big hat on the beach because you want it to shade you. It's the same principal. If you get those core design pieces right, everything falls into place."

As for the interiors, Kasler specified a timeless color for the floors and incorporated natural linens and casual, beautiful rugs throughout rooms decidedly less traditional than the ones in the homeowner's primary residence in Charlotte. She also mixed pieces from the furniture line she developed for Hickory Chair with pieces the homeowner found, notably with the glass-based dining table.

Kasler describes the clients as very understated, and emphasizes the fact that they come to the house often with their three children, all of whom are now young adults. "Together, we chose things that will be easy and relaxed for this beach environment, yet very comfortable and still kind of classic forever," says Kasler. "When you come to a vacation place to gather with family, people also bring things with them that become part of the fabric of the interiors."

Sophisticated simplicity is a hallmark of Kasler's work. Moreover, because the house is designed with an emphasis on views to the outside, it would be easy to miss the attention she paid to the functional details of rooms that are welcoming, adaptable, and easy to maintain. The family room's television, for example, is masked in a custom-built armoire, while the sheer, tone-on-tone remote-control draperies (which filter and soften the light) are rigged from hardware concealed in a recessed space—to avoid competing with the views.

"One of the debates early on was about paint color or wallcovering," Kasler says. "We ended up going quiet, honoring the integrity of the architecture and integrating some beautiful light fixtures that illuminate the unique ceiling detail." Pursley, meanwhile, was able to incorporate all the mechanicals and air conditioning in discreet ways, so that ceilings aren't punched through with vents and can lights. "It's visually very calm, and the clients really appreciate how simple it appears," says Kasler.

Kasler emphasizes that while "modern" isn't exactly the right word to describe these interiors, her clients in general these days are appreciating cleaner and simpler design. In the case of this particular house, it's been interesting for her to translate those ideas into a space so very comfortable.

Great architecture often pushes the envelope for a designer, presenting opportunities to do things he or she might not do otherwise. Adds Kasler, "Working on this level of design with someone of Ken Pursley's caliber really does feel like a privilege. And the sharing and collaboration of everyone involved make the fabric of the house itself have a positive kind of energy you can really feel as you move through the rooms." ■

Interior designer Suzanne Kasler understands the key dynamic of collaboration—among the designer, architect, builders, and clients—in realizing a successful house.

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